

"The Gift that Keeps on Giving"

John 14:15-18

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This morning our attention is drawn to a conversation Jesus had with his disciples just before his arrest and crucifixion. He and the disciples were gathered in the Upper Room somewhere in Jerusalem to observe Passover. Although his heart was heavy and his mind was focused on his impending death, Jesus wanted to tell the disciples about a gift they would soon receive.

“If you love me, you will obey what I command. I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever—the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.” (John 14:15-18)

We know this Spirit of truth as the Holy Spirit who lives in the hearts of those committed to following Jesus so they can continue the good work he began while on earth. In other words, the promise Jesus made to his disciples is meant for all of us, too.

It is appropriate we examine this passage today. This is Pentecost on the Christian calendar, a day that commemorates the Holy Spirit descending on the disciples.

Luke’s description of this event can be found in Acts 2:1-31. While the disciples were gathered in a room somewhere in Jerusalem “a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be

tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages as the Spirit enabled them.” (Acts 2:1-4)

Luke goes on to record that Peter, the one who had lost his voice around a charcoal fire the night Jesus was arrested, suddenly found it again. He boldly and powerfully shared the story of Jesus to all who would listen and concluded by saying, “Therefore let all of Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus whom you crucified both Lord and Christ.” (Acts 2:36)

I am confident Jesus' description of the Holy Spirit in his Farewell Address to the disciples in the Upper Room prior to his arrest quickly came to mind as they gathered in Jerusalem to observe Pentecost, an annual festival that occurred in late spring to commemorate Moses receiving the Ten Commandments from God on Mt. Sinai. When the Spirit suddenly filled that room and their hearts, I am certain the disciples recalled Jesus' words describing the purpose and function of the Holy Spirit.

That Farewell Address took on new meaning, didn't it? Jesus really did not leave them as orphans. They were not alone and never would be.

You know what I think they did as they reflected upon the appearance of the Spirit in their midst? I believe they began quoting everything Jesus told them about the Holy Spirit.

Recalling those words became their highest priority. Their future depended upon it.

This leads me to ask: **What do you think Jesus wanted the disciples to know about the Holy Spirit as they gathered for the final time before he was arrested?** Thanks to John, we have a source that sheds light on their conversation.

I wish to summarize what Jesus said about the Holy Spirit in the Farewell Address. I'll not be able to examine all five references (John 14:15-18; 14:26; 15:26; 16:5-11; 12-15) in great detail, but I'll do my best to include insights from all of them.

I chose the passage in John 14:15-18 as my text. I did this primarily because it contains the promise Jesus made not to leave the disciples as orphans. The One who referred to the disciples as 'little children' (John 13:33) knew his departure would create a void that must be

filled with another like him. For me, this is the starting point for any discussion on the Holy Spirit.

What did Jesus want the disciples to know about the Holy Spirit?

To begin, he wanted the disciples to know they needed the Holy Spirit more than they needed him in the flesh. You probably were not expecting to hear this right off the bat.

“I tell you the truth. It is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Counselor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you,” Jesus said to the disciples in the Upper Room hours before his crucifixion. (John 16:7)

In the flesh, Jesus had to deal with the same limitations the disciples did. He was confined by space and time. He could be only one place at a time.

How could he send the disciples in different directions and expect them to meet the intimidating challenges and strong resistance waiting for them? He could not go with each of them to encourage and empower them.

And yet, without his help they would fail. They would eventually give up and abandon this divine mission.

How could this be prevented? They needed Jesus in their hearts when he could no longer be with them as he had been.

This is why Jesus said to the disciples, 'It is good for you that I am going away'. His final departure at the ascension made it possible for the Spirit, another like him as John described, to come and to reside in their hearts.

This is exactly what the disciples needed as they prepared to go their separate ways. At Pentecost, this became abundantly clear.

At the same time, the disciples needed to know the Holy Spirit would do for them what Jesus had done for them while he was with them in the flesh. The Spirit would meet their needs just as Jesus had.

“I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever—the Spirit of truth.”

It is crucial we do not overlook the importance of the word 'another'. It means 'the same kind as'.

Jesus wanted the disciples to know the Holy Spirit shared his values, priorities, beliefs and passions. The Spirit would fully reflect the heart, mind, nature and will of God as embodied in Jesus' words and deeds.

It was not enough to say the Holy Spirit was going to be with the disciples as they continued the work Jesus began with them. They needed to know the Spirit would bring to mind everything Jesus said, shine a light on everything Jesus did and work tirelessly to help them follow in his footsteps.

This meant the Spirit would function as a teacher, an advisor, an advocate, an encourager, a counselor, a comforter and a guide.

The Spirit would give the disciples confidence when they struggled with self-doubts and instill courage in their hearts when they were overcome with fear.

The Spirit would remind the disciples of Jesus' teachings when they were tempted to ignore them and convict them of their mistakes when they were unfaithful.

Perhaps most importantly, the Spirit would empower the disciples to do what they never dreamed they could accomplish. The Spirit would enable them to be obedient to Christ's commands and to live up to his expectations.

In addition to all of this, Jesus wanted the disciples to know the Spirit could always be trusted to be truthful. At no time would the Spirit deceive them. Always the Spirit would lead the disciples to do what was right and best.

And that word always meant forever. The relationship between the disciples and the Spirit was not temporary. Until they were in the presence of Jesus on the other side of the

grave, the Spirit would be their constant companion, one who would walk alongside them, and make hope visible when they needed it most.

There is one other thing Jesus wanted the disciples to know. ***Not everyone would have the same experience with the Spirit as they would.*** Many people they talked to would not be receptive to the good news of the Gospel and the nurturing of the Spirit.

Jesus did not want the disciples to be surprised or alarmed by this. Neither did he want the unbelief of some to discredit their experience with the Spirit or undermine their confidence in the Spirit.

Even before he died, Jesus was eager to tell the disciples about the gift God would soon give them, the faithful presence of the Holy Spirit who would walk alongside them providing what they needed to continue the good work Jesus began. As they would quickly discover, this was a gift that keeps on giving.

It is my prayer you have received the Holy Spirit and rely daily upon the Spirit's guidance as you seek to live a life that reflects the heart and nature of Christ.

I can think of no decision you could make that would benefit you more.

I can think of no decision you could make that would benefit your family more.

I can think of no decision you could make that would please God more.

Will you make this decision today?